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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8047

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7958

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1445

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6809

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3662

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1891

RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0439

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8473

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8564

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHMCSUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001962

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, DRL, DS/IP/SCA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: RAJE AGAINST THE MACHINE

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1813

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 1747

[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 997

[1](#)D. NEW DELHI 439

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Rajasthan's opposition leader and former chief minister Vasundhara Raje of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is likely to remain a force in Rajasthan's political scene, despite efforts by the national BJP to marginalize her role. Raje's local popularity at the grassroots and her support among the party's state legislators allowed her to maintain her political strength despite BJP President Rajnath Singh's concerted effort to cut her down to size. END SUMMARY

Rajnath Singh Power Play Rajasthan

[1](#)2. (U) In August, BJP President Rajnath Singh tried to oust Vasundhara Raje as Leader of the Opposition in the state legislature by attempting to pin the blame on her for the party's dismal performance in the 2009 parliamentary elections as well as its narrow loss in the December 2008 state assembly elections. In the parliamentary polls, the BJP retained only four out of the state's 25 Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) seats, down from the 21 it held in the previous parliament. The Congress increased its tally from four to 20. As the face of the BJP in Rajasthan, Raje was once credited with the BJP's unexpectedly stellar performance in the 2003 Rajasthan assembly elections and the 2004 national elections. Egged on by her detractors within the Rajasthan unit of the party, Rajnath Singh used the back-to-back losses as an excuse to ask Raje to resign as the Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly (Ref B).

Raje: The Firebrand within the Firestorm

[1](#)3. (U) The BJP, Rajnath Singh and most observers were surprised when Raje fought back. She protested this dictum, defended her electoral record, claimed overwhelming support from the party's state legislators and refused to resign. Raje lobbied BJP heavy weight L.K. Advani, and paraded her

Rajasthan state legislators before the media and party leaders in Delhi. Her rivals accused her of indiscipline and insubordination. In the end, Raja relented a bit, and agreed to resign on the condition that she be allowed to select her replacement. Raje's 'compromise' coincided with the BJP's growing internal existential crises (Ref A). Her success in resisting the party bosses in Delhi emboldened other BJP'ers to speak up against the party leadership. The former BJP Chief Minister of Uttarkhand protested his own ouster from office after he was held accountable by the BJP President for the party's poor showing at the national polls.

Media Predictions: Raje Remains in Charge

14. (U) Jaipur's leading media pundits (the Hindu, NDTV, and leading local Hindi daily Rajasthan Patrika) believe that Raje will continue to control the party in state. They point out that Raje's popularity far outweighs Rajnath Singh's clout in Rajasthan. She also has the numbers in the legislature. Besides, Singh's tenure as BJP president expires in December and he has announced that he will not pursue a second term. According to them, whether she waits out Rajnath Singh's tenure or resigns earlier, she will remain the top party politician in the state.

Raje: Royal Rebel

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15. (U) A five-time Lok Sabha MP with nothing but wins in her electoral record, Raje was sworn in as Rajasthan's first female Chief Minister in 2003. A former royal from the princely state of Gwalior, Raje parted ways with her late brother, Madhavrao Scindia, the popular Congress leader and former minister by joining the BJP in the early 1980s. Close to Former Prime Minister Vajpayee and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, Raje served stints as Minister of State for External Affairs and for Small Industries. She returned to Rajasthan in 2003 to helm the BJP's successful state and national campaigns. Despite the 2008 and 2009 electoral disasters for the BJP in the state, she enjoys great personal popularity in Rajasthan.

Star Power or Party Discipline?

16. (SBU) COMMENT: As Chief Minister, Vasundra Raje developed a strong reputation for getting things done and improving delivery of services. She became a prolific fund-raiser for the party. And, she developed a mass base of support at the grassroots. Her proven star power means she will remain a prominent figure in the BJP for many years. Allowing Raje to continue in Rajasthan after she openly resisted the party could be too much of a blow to the BJP's view of itself as a party of discipline. It is more likely that Raje will be brought to Delhi in a leadership role within the BJP's national executive body. This would save face for the party brass who demanded her resignation, while acknowledging her independent political base in Rajasthan. This would be the best possible scenario for Raje, who would thus continue to control the party in Rajasthan while having a strong voice in the party's Delhi decision-making.

END COMMENT

ROEMER